

## LESSON 8: PROUDLY WE SING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM



*anthems  
bombardment  
national march  
symbols  
the star-spangled banner  
under arms*

### INTRODUCTION

When you hear the National Anthem, do you know what to do? National **anthems** are usually songs already in a culture that become so popular that the people claim them as a symbol for themselves and their nation. The United States adopted “The Star-Spangled Banner” this way. In fact, it took Congress 117 years to ratify what the American people had decided on in 1814. In addition to presenting the history of **“The Star-Spangled Banner,”** this lesson explains how you should pay your respect to it, indoors or outdoors.

### HISTORY OF OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM

Francis Scott Key wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner” as a result of a mission he was on during the War of 1812. Key was one of two people chosen to deliver official release papers for an American prisoner of war being held on a British ship in the harbor of Baltimore, Maryland.

The British agreed to release their prisoner only if the Americans did not immediately return to shore. The British were preparing to attack Fort McHenry and they did not want Key and his companions to warn the American troops. The two Americans complied and returned to their boat to wait. At dusk, when the **bombardment** began, the British told the waiting Americans to take one last

look at their flag because by morning it would be gone.

The bombardment continued throughout the night. At dawn, fog on shore hid Fort McHenry from view. Finally, the fog cleared and the American flag could be seen.

#### “THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER”

O say, can you see, by the dawn’s early light,  
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,  
O’er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,  
O say, does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave  
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mist of the deep,  
Where the foe’s haughty host in dread silence reposes,  
What is that which the breeze, o’er the towering steep  
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?  
Now it catches the gleam of the morning’s first beam,  
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream;  
‘Til the Star-Spangled Banner—O long may it wave  
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever when free men shall stand  
Between their loved homes and the war’s desolation;  
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven rescued land  
Praise the Power that has made and preserved us a nation.  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto, “In God is our trust;”  
And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave  
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The next day, the commander of Fort McHenry printed and distributed the poem Key had written throughout Baltimore. That night, an actor sang the poem to the tune of a British drinking song. A few days later, the Baltimore newspaper printed the poem with directions that it

be sung. In less than one week “The Star-Spangled Banner” had spread as far as New Orleans. Soon the whole country had taken it to heart. However, it was not until 117 years later, in 1931, that Congress passed an act making “The Star-Spangled Banner” the national anthem of the United States (36 USC Chap 10, Sec 170).

## **COURTESIES TO THE NATIONAL ANTHEM**

A national anthem is a symbol of the people, their land, and their institutions. When we salute during the playing of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” we are saluting the nation. Servicemen and women follow specific procedures in showing their respect to the U.S. anthem and to the anthems of friendly foreign nations.

Additionally, the armed forces give this same respect to the bugle call “To the Colors.” The military uses “To the Colors” when a band is not available or during bad weather.

### ***WHEN OUTDOORS IN UNIFORM***

When you are outdoors in uniform and you hear the national anthem or “To the Colors,” face the flag (if the flag is not visible, face the source of the music), stand at attention, and render the hand salute. Begin your salute on the first note of the music and hold the salute until the last note.

### ***WHEN OUTDOORS IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES***

When you are outdoors in civilian clothes and you hear the national anthem or “To the Colors,” face the flag (if the flag is not visible, again face the source of the music), stand at attention, and place your right hand over your heart. A male must remove his hat and hold it in his right hand

over his heart. A woman does not remove her hat, but she must place her right hand over her heart.

### ***DURING INDOOR CEREMONIES***

If you are attending an indoor ceremony and you hear the national anthem or “To the Colors,” stand, face the flag, and assume the position of attention. If the flag is not visible, face the source of the music or to the front and assume the position of attention. Do not salute unless you are **under arms**.

### ***WHEN IN A PRIVATE VEHICLE***

On a military base at the first note of the national anthem, all vehicles must come to a complete stop. If the driver is in uniform, that person must step out of the vehicle and take the appropriate actions for being outdoors and in uniform. If the driver is a civilian or is a service member who is not in uniform, that person must step out of the vehicle and take the appropriate actions for being outdoors and in civilian clothes. All other occupants sit quietly inside the vehicle until the last note of music is played.

## **THE NATIONAL MARCH, “THE STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER”**

The composition by John Philip Sousa entitled “The Stars and Stripes Forever” is the national march.

In late 1896, Sousa and his wife took a much-deserved vacation to Europe. While there, Sousa received word that the manager of the Sousa Band, David Blakely, had died suddenly. The band was scheduled to begin another cross-country tour soon, and Sousa knew he must return to America at once to take over the band’s business affairs. Sousa tells the rest of the story in his autobiography “Marching Along: Recollections of

Men, Women and Music” (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1994): “Here came one of the most vivid incidents of my career. As the vessel (the *Teutonic*) steamed out of the harbor I was pacing on the deck, absorbed in thoughts of my manager’s death and the many duties and decisions which awaited me in New York. Suddenly, I began to sense a rhythmic beat of a band playing within my brain. Throughout the whole tense voyage, that imaginary band continued to unfold the same themes, echoing and re-echoing the most distinct melody. I did not transfer a note of that music to paper while I was on the steamer, but when we reached shore, I set down the measures that my brain-band had been playing for me, and not a note of it has ever changed.” The march was an immediate success, and Sousa’s Band played it at almost every concert until his death over 25 years later.

(<http://www.dws.org/sousa/starsstripes.htm>)

“The composition by John Philip Sousa entitled ‘The Stars and Stripes Forever’ is hereby designated as the national march of the United States of America.” (36 USC Chap 10 Sec. 188)

## CONCLUSION

“The Star-Spangled Banner,” the national anthem of the United States, is symbolic of the struggles and successes of this country. It is still as inspirational today as when it first swept throughout the country in 1814. Either as a JROTC cadet in uniform or as a private citizen out of uniform, render “The Star-Spangled Banner” the courtesies and respect it deserves. Remember, “To the Colors” receives the same respect as the national anthem. “The Stars and Stripes Forever” demonstrates the strength and the power of patriotic music in the development of a national spirit.